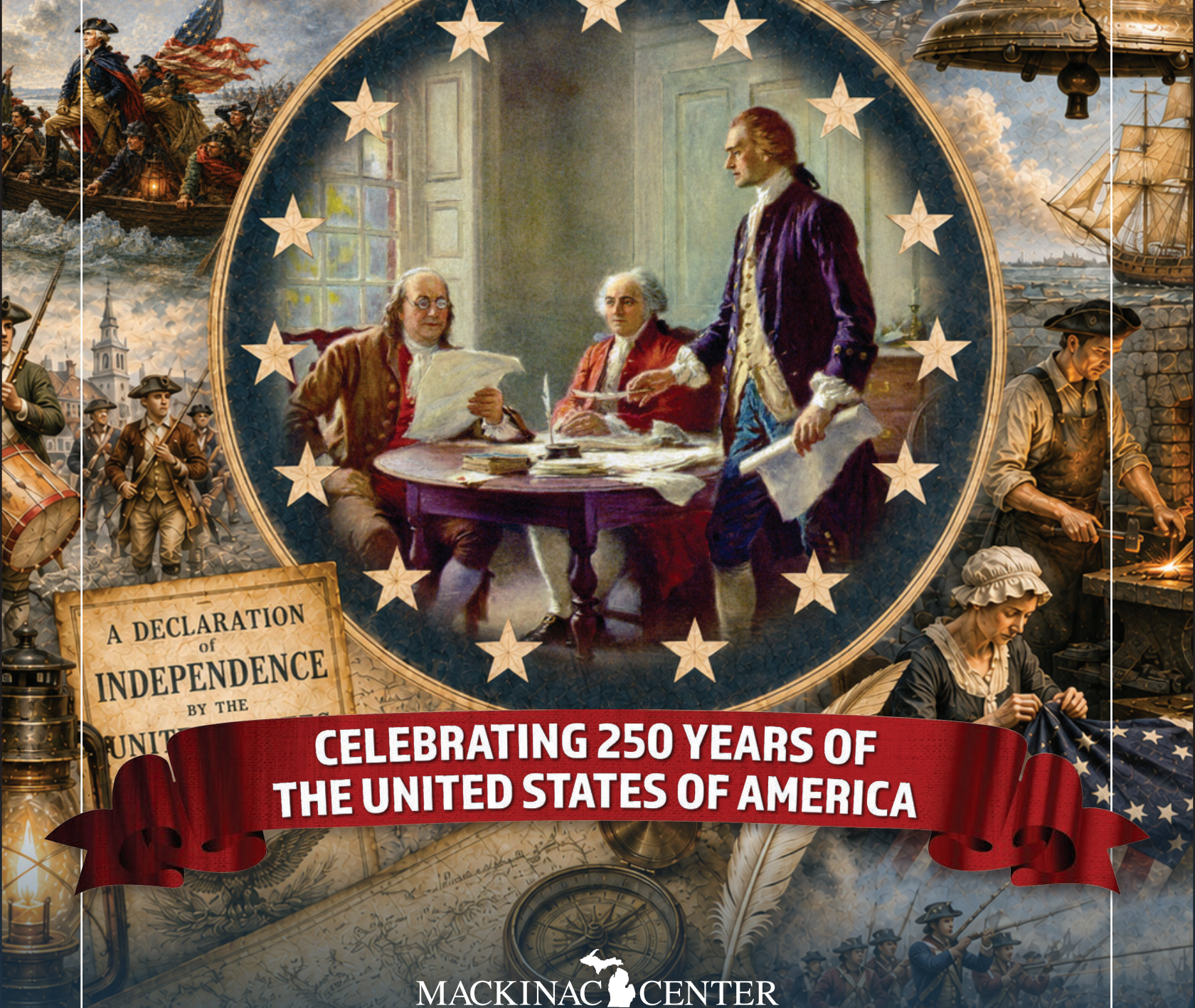


IN CONGRESS. JULY 4. 1776.
States of America.

JULY/AUGUST 2026

SPECIAL EDITION

IMPACT



A DECLARATION
of
INDEPENDENCE
BY THE
UNITED STATES

CELEBRATING 250 YEARS OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



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**MACKINAC
IN THE
MEDIA**

The Washington Post

When These Licenses Can't Cross State Lines, Consumers Suffer

"Automatic license recognition helps states compete for workers, expand access to health care and make it easier for families to relocate. Lawmakers should stop treating borders as barriers to honest work."

Jarrett Skorup, Vice President for Marketing and Communications

The Detroit News

American Independence and the Overton Window

"The window that shifted in 1776 enabled liberty and prosperity around the world. But the window can also shift away from freedom. It's our duty to preserve this experiment in self-government, and that work is never over."

Michael J. Reitz, Executive Vice President

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Politicians Exploit Low Voter Turnout to Raise Taxes

"State governments should encourage the largest number of people possible to make their voices heard on important ballot questions."

Michael J. Reitz, Executive Vice President

The Detroit News

MEDC Paid Social Media Influencers \$500K to Tout Michigan

"The Legislature needs to take a can opener to the MEDC and let in the disinfecting sunlight of transparency. It is, at the end of the day, our money being used to finance their economic development efforts. We deserve to know how it's spent and measure whether it is effective, independent of the claims of the MEDC."

Michael LaFaive, Senior Director of the Morey Fiscal Policy Initiative



Michigan Lawmakers OK \$125M in Earmarks, from Tulip Time to Eviction Aid

"I think it's useful to know who is specifically requesting the money, and give them a chance to explain why they're doing this and ... how it can serve a public purpose."

James Hohman, Director of Fiscal Policy

The Detroit News

I'm the Mayor of Gladwin. Why Can't I Speak Freely?

"As mayor, my job is to represent the people who elected me. I have a sworn duty to fight for their interests. That includes highlighting the good and bad of what goes on at city hall."

Sarah Kile, Mackinac Center Legal Foundation client



LETTER
FROM THE
PRESIDENT

A Love Letter to America?

I doubt I can say something about America on its 250th anniversary that hasn't been said already. But that's no reason to stop talking to ourselves about our country. We benefit from repeating important things. No one wants to hear "I love you" just once.

My editor, Jess Wyeth, suggested my column take the form of a love letter to America. I said that maybe what America needs now is a "tough love" letter instead.

In 1926, on the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, President Calvin Coolidge observed: "If all men are created equal, that is final. If they are endowed with inalienable rights, that is final. If governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, that is final."

A century later, it's hard to improve on that.

The greatest minds and most eloquent voices in history have spent two and a half centuries trying to capture what makes this country distinct. Statesmen, soldiers, immigrants, entrepreneurs, reformers, pastors, teachers, and ordinary citizens have all taken their turns. Any tribute I offer joins a conversation already rich with wisdom and gratitude.

America's story is not unique because we are wealthy, powerful, or geographically unique. Other nations have possessed those advantages. America is unique because it was founded on an idea.

“Our nation did not slowly stumble into freedom after centuries of trial and error.”

Our nation did not slowly stumble into freedom after centuries of trial and error. Freedom was present at the creation. The Declaration of Independence did not announce that government would grant rights to the people. It declared that people already possessed rights and that government existed to secure them.

That conviction is America’s defining characteristic. It demonstrates that America is more than a place or even a people; she is a proposition about human dignity, self-government, and liberty.

We have not always lived up to our ideals, and we’re falling short in important ways now. No honest observer could claim otherwise. Yet one of America’s greatest strengths is that our founding principles provide the standard by which we judge our shortcomings. We do not honor America by lowering those ideals to match our behavior. We honor and exhort America by striving to raise our behavior to meet its ideals.

Generations of Americans have been shaped by that aspiration.

It also explains a truth often overlooked. Democracy matters. Elections matter. Institutions matter. Free speech — that great self-corrective tool — matters. But America’s first commitment is not to majority rule alone. It is to liberty. Self-government — in our homes, communities, states and nation — is precious because free people govern themselves better than they are governed by others.

President Ronald Reagan often described America using John Winthrop’s phrase, “a shining city upon a hill.” The phrase endured because it captured how many Americans see their country — not as perfect, but as exceptional in its commitment to freedom and its belief that ordinary people can govern themselves.

Freedom — and the civic infrastructure that supports it — is not just a policy preference or arbitrary arrangement. It is part of our national identity. If we fail to inculcate civic literacy in each generation, we will eventually become like every nation whose people wish they could live as we do.

For 250 years, Americans have argued, disagreed, protested, voted, built, worshiped, invented, worked and dreamed under the protection of that freedom. Our task today is the same as it was in 1776: to preserve it, strengthen it, and pass it on.

Though that responsibility is a burden, it is an even greater privilege. ■



A stylized, handwritten signature of Joseph G. Lehman in dark ink.

By Joseph G. Lehman

President of the Mackinac Center



THE AMERICAN DREAM

Still Worth Chasing

Most of us reading these words were born in this country, living out some version of the American Dream. You may be a student pursuing a degree, a business owner expanding operations, a parent raising a family, or even a lawmaker working to serve the public.

But not all of us were born with this inheritance. Every year, thousands leave behind their homes, families, and familiar lives in pursuit of something greater: safety, freedom, economic opportunity, and the possibility to build a better future.

As we mark the 250th anniversary of our nation, the Mackinac Center is highlighting the stories of immigrants who made that leap and risked everything to chase the promise of America. Their journeys reflect the same spirit that defined our founding:

a willingness to leave behind the known to pursue liberty, opportunity, and self-determination.

The “Chasing the American Dream” video series features stories from Brazil, India, Venezuela, Armenia, Romania, and beyond. Each story shows us how the ideals that shaped our nation hundreds of years ago continue to inspire people around the world today.

We will continue sharing these stories throughout the year, and we hope they leave you inspired, with a renewed sense of gratitude for our great country. ■



By AnnMarie Pariseau
Director of Communications



“Not a lot of people around the world get this freedom, get this opportunity. This is a gift.”

~ Aisha Khan



“This country offers the best opportunity for people to try things, to fail multiple times in all kinds of attempts to achieve what they value and to try, try again until they find what makes them happy.”

~ Dr. Alex Tokarev



“I have a deep gratitude for where I am today. I have a deep gratitude for America.”

~ Moremil Richard



“Every time I come from Brazil to the United States and I go through customs, there is a weight that goes off my shoulders I know that here I actually have the ability to pursue my happiness and be free.”

~ Dr. Gabriel Benzecry



WHEN INFORMATION, *and People,* WANTED TO BE FREE



“All sensible people in England are persuaded that the colonies are lost to the homeland,”

Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais informed Louis XVI in September 1775, nearly a year before the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The king of France may have ended up regretting that he listened to the republican-minded playwright, but Beaumarchais was correct. Why were most of the Whig Party and much of the British population

ready to let the colonies go just a few months after the Shot Heard ‘Round the World?

We are familiar with the way newspapers and pamphlets stirred up revolutionary fervor on this side of the Pond, but the real battle for hearts and minds was fought and lost back in England. And one important reason was that British subjects had new access to what we now call public information.

Until 1771, sessions of Parliament were not published. Journalists occasionally wrote up disguised records of the “Magna Lilliputia” Parliament with legislators’ names “filleted” or turned into aliases, but for the most part the public was left in the dark about what lawmakers were debating. In 1775, after the collapse of a high-profile attempt to prosecute a London printer, Englishmen first got access to a regularly published “Parliamentary Register.” The legislative debate over the American War would be a hot topic for the next eight years, and for the first time, people were able to follow it closely.

As a result, the pro-independence views of the Whig Party got much wider distribution throughout the



war, and the case for letting the colonies go became stronger. Even in those blessedly polling-free days, there was a clear and steady decline in public support for spending additional blood and treasure to hold onto an unwilling population. The American Revolution succeeded in part because the details and issues of the conflict were open for discussion in the British media.

Reporting news can be a discouraging job; governments will always try to hide the truth from their own citizens, and often the biggest bombshells receive only a yawn from the masses. But years of chiseling away at official secrecy does have an effect.

Michigan Capitol Confidential has a far more modest purview than that of Edmund Burke or Thomas Paine,

but we stand in a tradition of people who do the work to make information free. With your support, we look forward to our mission of bringing accurate facts to a candid world. ■



By Tim Cavanaugh
Senior Editor



GETTING TO KNOW ★ LARRY REED

Larry Reed, who guided the Mackinac Center for decades and became president emeritus in 2008, remains a beloved leader.

He paid a visit to Midland in July to speak with Mackinac staff and supporters. Larry discussed his new book, "Born of Ideas: How Principles, Faith, and Courage Forged America." Through vivid essays on famous founders and overlooked champions of liberty, Larry traces the principles of freedom, responsibility, faith and character that shaped the nation in the past and to this day.

Awards, books, and institutional achievements tell only part of Larry's story. His greatest legacy may be found in the countless people he has encouraged, mentored, and inspired over the years.

Our colleague Chris Smith recounts a story that reveals why so many people admire Larry, not just as a leader but as a person.

My interest in liberty, free enterprise and being a man of character (this one's a work in progress) originated at the same time.

It all began with Larry Reed, who had just given my family the honor of a personal phone call.

Apparently, while he was walking to his mailbox, Larry had accidentally been shot in the head with a BB gun by my oldest brother.

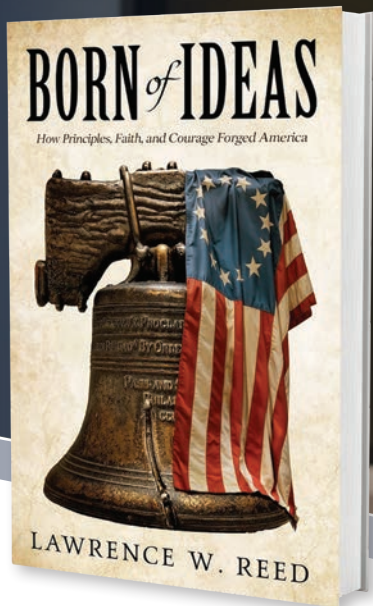
It was not exactly the phone call any parent wants to receive, and so as punishment and recourse my brother was instructed to take across the road to "Mr. Reed" a carton of eggs and give his personal apology.

Rather than scold my brother, Larry instead took the opportunity to have a conversation — one that resulted in Larry offering my brother a job, which he eagerly accepted.

Before long, my brother was mowing Larry's lawn, raking leaves and shoveling the driveway.

When my oldest brother outgrew the work and moved on, those responsibilities passed on to my next brother, and eventually I was asked to help walk my neighbor's dogs. He was going to be out of town for a few days and could use the help. I had no idea at the time that he was traveling the world and spent time with Polish dissidents who resisted the Soviet regime.





Larry introduced me to the dogs and showed me how to feed them and where to walk them. I always remember feeling that I was treated with unearned respect (fitting for a man who wrote a book on character).

In that moment, I knew that I could sense a man of character, though I couldn't explain why. In retrospect, I realize he was not just paying me or my siblings a few bucks to do chores. He was inspiring us to be better people and join him in the fight for liberty. He would give us a book here or there and invite us to lectures. He continued to teach us, sometimes indirectly, how to appreciate freedom and keep pursuing knowledge.

My siblings and I can all point to Larry's influence on our lives. My sister later was an intern with the Mackinac Center Legal Foundation. My older brother became an economics professor and sits on the Mackinac Center's Board of Scholars.

As for me, I had never stopped to consider what life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness meant until I met Larry. But after that, I decided I believed what he believed: America's ideals matter. They're worth

fighting for, though I use the term a bit more metaphorically than Larry would; I've never risked my life in ways he has. And now I am honored to do my part at the Mackinac Center, serving as the database manager.

Sometimes, as I wander into the kitchen at work to read and reread articles about my former neighbor's endeavors or see the picture of Larry receiving the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland, I can't help but smile.

To think that my interest in free enterprise began when Larry Reed was shot in the head on his way to the mailbox. ■



By Christopher Smith
Database Manager

Scan QR Code to
purchase the book.



The Power of Ideas

America's Founding and the Overton Window

What motivated a group of British colonists to pledge their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor to a rebellion against the most powerful empire in the world 250 years ago? The answer is complicated, but an undeniable driving factor was their ideas. The colonists believed deeply in self-rule, individual liberty and the dangers of concentrated government power. These ideas propelled them to risk it all and create this nation.

History bears witness to the power of ideas. Behind every important historical development are beliefs in certain principles. As historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. said, "Ideas are the great forces of history." But the American Revolution deserves special attention because it is a prime example of how ideas shape history.

Pre-revolutionary colonial America was fertile ground for ideas. Society was highly literate, so much so that printers like Benjamin Franklin could become famous. The colonists distributed and digested pamphlets, journals, sermons, newspapers and more. Discussions and debates about politics, government and society were common and widespread.

As a result, when the British asserted their imperial authority after the Seven Years' War, many colonists could articulate precisely how their rights as British citizens were being violated. Many believed that without checks and balances, government power would consolidate in a strong executive. The actions of the British crown were warning signs to this end for the colonists. This is why relatively small taxes and other minor regulations incited the colonists to rebel.

John Adams knew how important these ideas were to the Revolution. "The Revolution was affected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people," Adams wrote to the famous publisher Hezekiah Niles in 1818. "This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people was the real American Revolution."

The 250th anniversary of America's founding is a perfect time to remember the importance of ideas, especially for think tanks. Ideas are the lifeblood of the Mackinac Center

and similar organizations. We defend and uplift the most important ideas, such as those about free markets, limited government, the rule of law, and individual freedom.

The Mackinac Center's late Executive Vice President Joe Overton recognized another crucial way think tanks use ideas. He showed that think tanks are important because they can expand the range of ideas that become part of the political discourse. Unlike politicians who can only support beliefs that are politically popular in the moment, think tanks can introduce new concepts into the public consciousness. That range of ideas is known today as the Overton Window.

Shifting the Overton Window is often how important policy changes happen. We can see this phenomenon in education policy. Fifty years ago, no state allowed parents to use public support to send their child to a private school of their choice. Today, more than half the states do. This came about because think tanks, including the Mackinac Center, introduced these policy ideas to the public. Once voters began favoring these ideas, politicians started paying attention and supporting them.

This is why think tanks, universities and other research organizations are so important for policy reform and, in turn, for improving society. Without them, new policy ideas would rarely see the light of day. They would have to come from politicians, and few are the politicians who would willingly risk their next election on supporting an idea that is not already politically popular.

Much has changed in America in its 250 years — some for the better and some for the worse. But one thing that remains and that all Americans should remember is that this is a nation founded on ideas. These ideas of self-government, the rule of law and individual freedom are what make this country worth celebrating every year. ■



A stylized, handwritten signature of Michael Van Beek in dark ink.

By Michael Van Beek
Vice President for Research



Under British Rule

1765 -1774

Stamp Act

Boston Massacre

Boston Tea Party

First Continental Congress

Battles of Lex & Concord

In Revolt

1775 -1782

Crossing the Delaware

Battle of Saratoga

British Surrender at Yorktown

American Independence

1783 -1791

Constitutional Convention

Shay's Rebellion

First U.S. Congress convenes

George Washington elected president



The Virginia Resolves

Patrick Henry's resolutions challenged Parliament's authority to tax the colonies, transforming scattered frustration into a constitutional argument for self-government.

Newspapers connected thirteen colonies into a common political conversation. Patriot writers like Samuel Adams authored articles in the Boston Gazette to spread ideas of liberty and resistance throughout America.

The Press

The Pulpit

Clergymen framed liberty as a moral responsibility, encouraging Americans in their sermons to view resistance to tyranny as consistent with faith.



Cheap, widely circulated pamphlets brought constitutional debates to ordinary Americans and helped create a shared language of rights and liberty.

Political Pamphlets

Olive Branch Petition

The colonies' final appeal for reconciliation demonstrated that independence was not the original goal — but Britain's rejection made separation increasingly thinkable.



Thomas Paine transformed independence from a radical idea into a popular cause, persuading thousands that Americans could govern themselves.

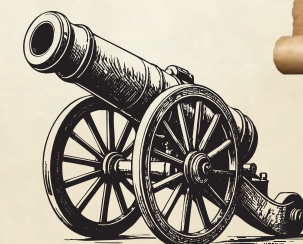
Common Sense

Declaration of Independence

Benjamin Franklin and American diplomats secured French military support, proving the Revolution had become an international cause with a real chance of success.

Treaty of Alliance

America's first national constitution united the states under a common government, turning the ideal of independence into a functioning political experiment.



Articles of Confederation

Treaty of Paris recognizes American Independence

Great Britain formally recognized American independence, turning a revolutionary claim into an accepted political reality.



Essays by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay, and their Anti-Federalist opponents sparked a national debate over liberty and self-government.

Federalist & Anti-Federalist Papers

U.S. Constitution

The Constitution established a durable framework for republican self-government, balancing liberty with effective national institutions.



The Bill of Rights guaranteed fundamental freedoms and placed clear limits on government power, reinforcing the principle that rights belong to the people.

Bill of Rights

A Farmer's Faith, A Fat



When Marvin Rubingh first decided to support the Mackinac Center, he didn't write a check.

He donated a steer.

Directing the proceeds of a cattle auction to the Mackinac Center, Marv found a way to put more of his money toward his goal and less of it into taxes. It was the kind of practical approach you might expect from a fifth-generation farmer who has spent a lifetime finding better ways to do things.

"Growing up on a dairy farm in Antrim County, I always loved farming: corn, hay, cows, trees, land," he says. "You look around, and it's just beautiful. It doesn't get any better."

Rubingh's Dairyland is a thriving operation outside Ellsworth, Mich., where Marv and his wife Jane raised seven children and welcomed 26 grandchildren (and counting). A graduate of Dordt College, he serves on his township board, and his son Jarris is an Antrim County commissioner. He has also brought innovation to the farm, installing airtight feed storage silos that dramatically reduced spoilage and cut four hours each day from the task of feeding the herd. Marv is an innovator!

Marv's connection to the Mackinac Center runs through his family as well. When his 16-year-old daughter Monica began writing letters to the local newspaper editor about the Center's work, then-President Larry Reed brought her on as an intern. Monica has said the internship confirmed something for her: A girl raised among cows and

ther's Legacy



By Michael Schut
*Director of Strategic
Partnerships*

**“The Mackinac Center came to her defense.
That’s the kind of work that matters.”**

crops had no interest in sitting behind a desk for the rest of her life. The Mackinac Center is glad to have played a small part in that discovery.

Faith, Marv says, is at the root of everything, including how he and Jane decide where to give. “My worldview comes from the Bible. Scripture influences everything we do, our whole life.” He never makes those decisions alone. “If you believe in biblical principles, husband and wife unity is number one.”

That same conviction shapes how Marv sees the United States. “As we celebrate 250 years as the greatest country on earth,” he says, “we remember that America was founded by men deeply influenced by Christianity, biblical principles, and the Western tradition of God-given rights and limited government.”

Why does Marvin Rubingh support the Mackinac Center?

“It’s a group that does public policy research and advocates for freedom. It watches the Legislature and tries to influence it for what’s right, within the freedoms we need to live. The most recent thing that comes to mind is a woman who

spoke up at a school board meeting, and the school board tried to censor her. The Mackinac Center came to her defense. That’s the kind of work that matters.”

The Mackinac Center is grateful for Marv’s generosity, and for the example he and his family show of living out their convictions on the farm, in local government, and in support of freedom. ■



WE ARE PROUD TO BE AMERICANS



U.S. men's Olympic hockey team poses with the late Johnny Gaudreau's children after winning the gold medal.

In the year of America's 250th anniversary, Mackinac Center employees took a moment to reflect on the liberties that define the nation, share stories of the moments that made them proud to be Americans and reveal the ways they celebrated freedom this year.

"Watching both the men's and women's hockey team take home gold at this year's Winter Olympics. Jack Hughes' face after the game says it all. I teared up when they honored the late, great Johnny Gaudreau by bringing his kids out for pictures."

- Ryan Rickel, Advancement Manager

"I was particularly moved during the president's July 4 speech honoring several veterans, including some who were over 100 years old. Behind them hung American flags dating back to the Revolutionary War, a reminder that this nation was born in sacrifice and loss, but also a deep conviction in the promise of freedom.

"The moment brought to mind the Declaration of Independence and the founders' solemn promise to 'mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.' Just 250 years later, I remain deeply grateful for those revolutionaries, ordinary yet extraordinary men and women who sacrificed their lives, homes, and stability, and rejected the status quo in pursuit of an uncertain but freer future."

- AnnMarie Pariseau, Director of Communications



Photo by Shutterstock

"I took my dad to the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library & Museum to experience its special exhibit, 'The American Eagle' which reflects on our nation's Bicentennial in 1976 and the gifts President Ford received. The museum features the original Northwest Ordinance, on loan from the National Archives and Records Administration, and 'Waltzing with the Queen: President Ford and the Anglo-American Special Relationship.' This last exhibit highlights the enduring bonds between our two nations (much improved since 1776). It includes a recipe written by Queen Elizabeth II to President Eisenhower, which she noted serves 16 people. We had a great time!"

- Cami Pendell, Vice President for Government Affairs

"Almost every Fourth of July of my life has been at a family church conference, but the timing this year worked out that we were home. So, for the first time, our family shot off our own fireworks. With four kids ages 5 through 13, it was definitely a highlight!"

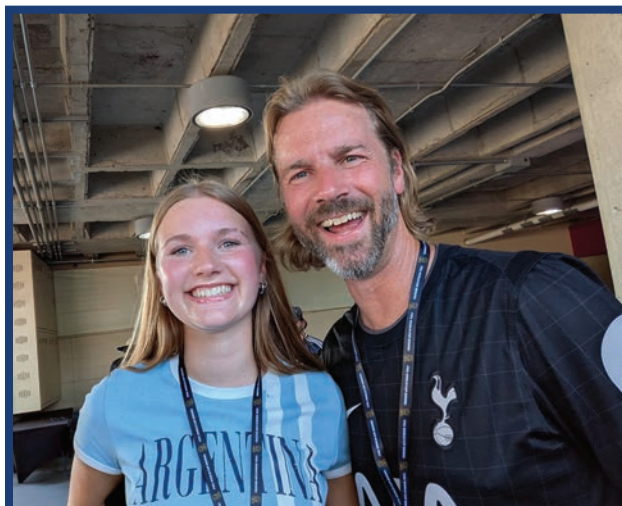
- Jarrett Skorup, Vice President for Marketing and Communications

"Our system of government is not to placate and empower a warlord, or to advance the interests of those in power — and much of government around the world and across history has been that. It is instead for the peace, prosperity and flourishing of the people here. I've been trying to help rekindle that ideal in my fellow citizens."

- James Hohman, Director of Fiscal Policy

"Watching the U.S. host the World Cup this year reminded me of what makes America special. The videos of gobsmacked Europeans marveling over the size of American gas stations, supermarkets, and food portions were entertaining. But what was more meaningful were the thousands of people from different cultures who shared how kind, generous and welcoming Americans proved to be. It was a good reminder that our society is marked more by openness and friendliness than anything else."

- Mike Van Beek, Vice President for Research



Mike Van Beek with his daughter in Kansas City for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.



Photos by Michael Van Beek



The Founders' Exceptional Makes Our World

As we look back on 250 years of the American experiment, it's significant to recognize the importance of the legal system we inherited from the Founders. In their wisdom, they created a system that allows us to defend our rights centuries after the creation of our country.

The Founders recognized the importance of creating a system that deals with people as they are, not in their idealized form. "If men were angels, no government would be necessary," James Madison wrote in Federalist 51, and the country would need neither "external nor internal controls on government." Recognizing that this is not reality, Madison and our other Founders crafted a system designed to prevent government overreach and preserve our foundational constitutional rights.

Two key elements of the legal system the Founders created are the separation of powers and the rule of law. Recognizing that ambition must be made to check ambition, the Founders created three branches of government, each designed to serve as a check against the other. They recognized the need for a politically insulated judiciary, with courts shielded from political pressure to disregard the law in favor of popular passions. To check the ambition of men, the Founders envisioned a system where the rule of law, not of man, would govern all equally. In doing so, they provided

MACKINAC  **CENTER**
LEGAL FOUNDATION

Legal System Work Possible

us with an enduring gift that allows citizens to oppose government overreach and vindicate the very rights that unite us as Americans.

At the Mackinac Center Legal Foundation, we recognize our solemn duty to preserve our Constitution and protect the rights of citizens in Michigan and across the country. The system we have inherited empowered us to overturn Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's unconstitutional COVID policies and restore the separation of powers to Michigan's government.

Thanks to this system, we've been able to stand up for citizens and public officials who have faced censorship or retaliation for speaking out against government. It has allowed us to fight for property rights, government transparency, educational and free speech rights, and to oppose coercive government unions in Michigan and across the country. We owe a debt to both our Founders and our supporters for enabling us to continue to defend the rights that help define us as Americans, whether in 1776 or 250 years later. ■



By Steve Delie
Senior Attorney

MACKINAC CENTER
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

The Mackinac Center's work, including this magazine, is made possible by the Mackinac Center Board of Directors:

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Celebrate America's

"The Adventures of Penny & Paws" introduces young readers to big ideas through small-scale adventures. Penny and her loyal canine companion explore the values that help people and communities flourish: responsibility, innovation, hard work, and freedom. Throughout the story, readers encounter colorful characters, clever humor, and plenty of opportunities to learn while having fun.

What began as a creative way to introduce economic and civic concepts to children has become a favorite resource for families and educators alike. Teachers across Michigan and beyond are using "Penny & Paws" in their classrooms, sparking conversations about citizenship, character, and the principles that shape

everyday life. The combination of imagination, humor, and timeless lessons has made "Penny & Paws" a popular Mackinac Center publication.

To celebrate America's 250th birthday, Penny and Paws are back with a special commemorative adventure: "The Past Is the Present."

As preparations begin for a birthday celebration unlike any other, Penny worries about finding the perfect gift for America. Fortunately, Paws has an idea. Armed with their trusty Magic Window, the duo travel back through time to meet some very special guests connected to the nation's founding.

Their journey introduces readers to a cast of memorable historical pets, including

The Adventures of Penny & Paws

Visit the website to see more! There is plenty of fun to be had! See what's there:

- Meet the characters
- Read through select quotes
- Get a chuckle from Paws' Joke Kennel
- Request copies of the books

mackinac.org/penny-and-paws



250th with Penny & Paws

George Washington's hunting dog, Thomas Jefferson's musical mockingbird, and Benjamin Franklin's quick-witted squirrel. Along the way, children learn about the men behind America's founding. They encounter Washington's commitment to the rule of law, Jefferson's championing of education and religious liberty, and Franklin's remarkable contributions as an inventor, diplomat, and public servant.

True to the spirit of the series, these lessons arrive wrapped in laughter, friendship, and a healthy dose of animal antics. But beneath the jokes and adventures lies an important message: The freedoms Americans enjoy today were secured by people whose ideas and sacrifices continue to shape our lives.

As our nation marks 250 years of liberty,

"The Past Is the Present" reminds young readers that history is not merely something to study. It is a gift to understand, appreciate, and carry forward.

And, of course, there is cake. ■



Scan the barcode to get your FREE copy. Extra copies will be available for purchase.



Other adventures also available!



FREE ENTERPRISE IS AMERICA'S SUPERPOWER



America was born with a mission to defer power to individuals. Indeed, America's underappreciated superpower comes from what its citizens figure out for themselves.

From the very beginning, the idea for the American economy was to set the rules for how Americans engage with each other. The government is here to “secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity,” as the Constitution's Preamble states.

The blessings of liberty are not just to let people flourish in arts and culture as they see fit. They are to benefit ourselves by benefiting others. In the system of voluntary exchange, people figure out how to use the resources of the world — including their own talents — to serve the wants and needs of others. And as a reward, they get to share in the gains.

It is not the government's job to tilt the scales used by the players in the market. Rather, government establishes laws that form the bounds of interactions. It establishes property rights, defines and enforces rules against malfeasance, and sets the legal framework for contracts used in commerce. As former Michigan Supreme Court Justice Thomas Cooley put it, “The state can have no favorites. Its business is to secure the industry of all and to give all the benefit of equal laws.”

That's not just a statement of ideals. It was a ruling against giving public funds to private businesses, an abuse of the system.



By James Hohman
Director of Fiscal Policy

The hands-off approach to economic interaction has paid off in the form of an economy that encourages millions of people to cooperate with each other. Look at the ways the American people have made themselves and the rest of the world more prosperous. From inventing the lightning rod and the telephone to the modern conveniences around us, Americans have used their freedom to improve the lives of others. This system has made Americans the most prosperous people the world has ever known.

It is part of the Mackinac Center's mission to protect the free markets that have caused so much prosperity. We've stopped coercive acts on workers, entrepreneurs, parents and others to let them live, work and raise their kids as they see fit.

But we cannot do this alone. American government doesn't always live up to its ideals, not just in the economic realm but in other fundamental aspects. It is the American people's duty to choose representatives who live up to American ideals and to hold them accountable when they fall short.

One way to bolster the ideals that have led to such greatness is to acknowledge and be grateful for them. This Semiquincentennial is an excellent time to reflect on the principles that brought us where we are. ■

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Building the Future Starts Here

Your support of the Mackinac Center builds something bigger than any single policy win. We have spent 39 years fighting to keep Michigan free and prosperous. We helped effect the privatization of noninstructional services in public schools in the early 1990s, and we were still at it last year, when the Legislature approved zero corporate subsidies for the first time in more than 20 years.

As America turns 250, the fight feels more important than ever. Good policy is rarely left untouched, and some of our most important work is unseen. The next generation will have to change bad policies and preserve good ones.

Being part of two intern groups over the last year has given me a front-row seat to something worth celebrating. Each group has been different, but the constant was a room full of young people who are deeply determined to see our country's founding principles endure. When you invest in the Mackinac Center, you invest in mentoring the future of our country.

These are our future lawyers, reporters, business leaders and policymakers. We will leave the Mackinac Center with something most college students never get: a deep understanding of how ideas become policy and why defending those ideas matters.

“Thank you for giving me, and many others, the chance to work toward a better future.”

Across every conversation with our supporters, one message is clear: Keep fighting for what is right and never stop learning. That's exactly what this next generation intends

to do, and I am confident in our ability to succeed.

So thank you. Thank you for giving me, and many others, the chance to work toward a better future. The American Founders gave everything to build something worth preserving. You are investing in the people who will carry it forward. I am grateful to be a part of it. ■



By Dani Pohl
Advancement Intern